

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000187

SIPDIS

USEU PASS AMBASSADOR LUNSTEAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR BRIEFS COLOMBO CO-CHAIRS ON HIGH-LEVEL NORWEGIAN VISIT

REF: COLOMBO 157

Classified By: CDA JAMES F. ENTWISTLE FOR REASON 1.4D.

11. (C) Summary. The Norwegian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Petersen made progress in working out an LTTE/GSL tsunami coordination mechanism although the deal is not final. Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar, who has been facilitating the discussions, is encouraged. Colombo co-chair representatives agreed that the public statement after the January 25 Brussels co-chair meeting should be short and focus on expressing hope that GSL/LTTE tsunami coordination will, down the road, have a positive impact on the peace process. Brattskar said that it was clearly Prabhakaran who met with Peterson so rumors of the LTTE leader's demise under the tsunami waves are not true. End Summary

12. (C) Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar briefed Colombo co-chair representatives January 24 on the just-concluded visit by a high-level delegation led by Foreign Minister Peterson and including Development Minister Johnson, DFM Helgesen and Sri Lanka peace envoy Erik Solheim. Charge' represented the U.S.

Finding a GSL/LTTE Tsunami Coordination Mechanism

13. (C) Brattskar noted that the GON had been clear in its preparations for the visit that it was tsunami-related, not peace process, although in reality, of course, the two were closely linked. FM Peterson met with both President Kumaratunga (CBK) and with LTTE leader Prabhakaran (London-based LTTE heavyweight Anton Balasingam, LTTE political chief Thamilchelvam and LTTE Sea Tiger chief Soosai sat in). Brattskar, who has seen Prabhakaran in action a number of times, said there is no/no doubt that it was really Prabhakaran who met with the Norwegian delegation so, Brattskar said, Prabhakaran is clearly "alive and well, although he was very subdued."

14. (C) The primary topic of the extensive round of Norwegian meetings with both sides had been the formation of a joint GSL/LTTE mechanism to deliver tsunami relief assistance in the tsunami affected areas of the north and east, discussions which Brattskar has been quietly facilitating for several weeks (reftel). Brattskar said much progress was made over the weekend but things are not in final. Brattskar and Helgesen had gone back up to Kilinochchi early January 24 for "very useful" further discussions with the LTTE on the mechanism. It will now be referred to the LTTE central committee and Brattskar is hopeful there will be another GSL/LTTE round of discussions by the end of this week. Both President Kumaratunga and Prabhakaran really want this, Brattskar commented, and both are leaving discussions to the working level and staying out of details (which is particularly hard for the President, the Norwegian noted). Brattskar noted that both realize their reputations are at stake since, if they can't cooperate on an unspeakable national disaster, what hope is there that they will ever cooperate on anything else? Brattskar commented that, in the talks he has been facilitating, both sides "are listening to each other and are flexible." A three-tier mechanism (local, regional and national levels) is currently under discussion. The local part is basically already in effect in that GSL/LTTE tsunami cooperation at the district level is very good, Brattskar said. The UN and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) share that view, he commented.

15. (C) Brattskar speculated that the outcome of the "mechanism talks" will be something that builds on the old North East Reconstruction Fund (NERF) idea, some sort of "joint purse" into which donors could put money, etc. Japanese Ambassador Suda immediately said his government could not send money that way. Brattskar said the details would have to be worked out but he remains optimistic. Brattskar stressed, however, that although the discussions had leaked to the papers over the weekend (each side typically blames the other), it is crucial in his view that

the details of these discussions, which are still "fragile," not become public and that their very existence still be closely-held despite the press leaks. (No doubt Brattskar is chagrined to see the details of the weekend Norwegian discussions all over the frontpage of the January 25 English language "Mirror" newspaper.) In particular, Brattskar commented, it is crucial to avoid the perception that the discussions are something the co-chairs and/or the Norwegians dragged the two sides into. This is absolutely not so, Brattskar said. The GSL and the LTTE wanted and initiated the talks. He is merely facilitating. The mechanism would only deal with tsunami coordination; it is not a "back door" to the LTTE's Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) plan. "This is not ISGA-lite."

Child Soldiers and Muslims

16. (C) Brattskar said he had been struck during the delegation's LTTE meetings and during the discussions he has been facilitating by the fact that the LTTE had raised the issue of Muslims in the east who had been particularly hard hit by the flood. "I'm not used to hearing the LTTE express concern about Muslims." The LTTE had also insisted that, whatever the final "mechanism" looked like, Muslims would have to be involved in the decision-making process. Brattskar said the LTTE was also extremely sensitive to charges that it was using post-tsunami confusion to recruit child soldiers. LTTE political chief Thamilselvan had denied this vehemently and said that international organizations, rather than blast the LTTE publicly, should bring specific cases to the attention of the LTTE leadership "and we will solve them." Brattskar also noted that the Norwegian delegation had visited the hard-hit coastal town of Mullaitivu (home of the Sea Tigers) and that he had been very impressed with how much better things looked than when he had visited the town a week after the tsunami.

SIPDIS

Short and Sweet Co-Chairs Statement Needed

17. (C) Turning to the co-chairs public statement that will be issued after the January 25 Brussels meeting, Brattskar asserted (and the other co-chair reps agreed) that a lengthy, detailed public statement (that is, like the draft the EU has been circulating) would be unhelpful. Mention of every detail only will give obstructionists more ammunition to pick the process apart. There was general agreement that the co-chair statement should be no more than half a dozen sentences. In a nutshell, co-chair representatives agree, the statement should call for and/or applaud GSL/LTTE tsunami coordination (without mentioning ongoing discussions described above) and express hope that over time the ties developed in this tsunami coordination endeavor will lead to progress on the peace front. The co-chairs must "do no harm" with the statement, Brattskar stressed. In particular hard language urging an early return to the peace table must be avoided. EU Charge' Wilton undertook to pass these Colombo views back to the EU bureaucracy.

Need for Decentralized Nationwide Reconstruction Process

18. (C) Brattskar said that Norwegian Development Minister Johnson had expressed the view "to everyone she met" that the post-tsunami reconstruction phase (the nationwide effort, not just the GSL/LTTE mechanism) needed to be decentralized down to the local "government agent" level rather than keeping with Sri Lankan tradition and having everything controlled by the central government in Colombo. Johnson had also been quite outspoken that reconstruction aid needed to be well coordinated and that regional "asymmetries" in the reconstruction effort needed to be avoided. The other co-chair representatives agreed with that approach (which is also held by the local IFI reps and the UN here) and noted that the GSL needs to be engaged on these issues at the highest level. Brattskar commented that DFM Helgesen might seek to discuss these issues at Brussels.

ENTWISTLE